

How To Relieve Back To School Stress and Anxiety

Back To School Time? No Sweat!

By Elizabeth Scott, M.S.,



Many kids and parents are feeling growing anxiety over getting back to school -- the morning rush, the homework, the quicker pace of life. While this doesn't mean we don't like school, the advent of the busier lifestyle, along with the new changes that 'back to school' time brings (new teachers, new classmates, new material) can all lead to increased stress. Here's what you can do to relieve back to school stress in your kids, and in yourself:

Start Early



Let's face it -- over the summer, most families take their cues from the sun and stay up later. While it may be tempting to keep the late-night fun going up until the end, starting your school routine a few weeks early can help ease the transition back to school. Starting two to three weeks before the advent of school, begin going to bed and getting up close to when you need to for school, and try to eat on a more regular schedule as well. This advice isn't just for little kids -- teens and adults need quality sleep for proper functioning as well, and getting your schedule straight now will help ensure that you all start the school year off more prepared and don't feel as much anxiety over the advent of that first day.

Do A Walk-Through



While we're on the topic of starting early, it's a good idea to visit the school before the first day. For kids who are going to be first-timers for kindergarten, first grade, middle school, or even high school, this can help them feel more comfortable with the new place and get a better idea of where to go once they're there. Even for returning students, it doesn't hurt to know where the classroom is, say hello to whatever staff is there getting ready, and start getting excited about going back.

Stack The Deck

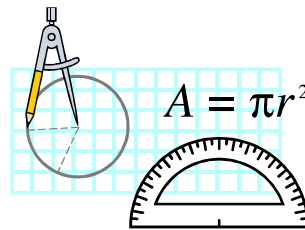


If you have any input in your child's class assignment, it's a good idea to ensure that there's at least one friend in the class or classes your child will be attending. If classes are assigned without your input, talk to other parents and try to find out who your child will be sharing a class with ahead of time, and let them know. Knowing who is in their class will give them something else to look forward to, and remind them of what they enjoy about school. If your child is entering kindergarten or first grade, it might be a good idea to have a play date with one of the children who will be in their class a week before school starts to help them feel more comfortable and get more excited about seeing their friends again in school.

Get Ready

As most moms will tell you, nothing alleviates stress like a good shopping trip. While I say that half-joking, there's some real truth in the idea that back to school shopping can help kids get more excited about school starting, at least for most kids. If your child really couldn't care less about shopping, you can make it quick and painless, but for kids who relish the annual decisions of which clothes, backpacks, and other supplies will be theirs this year, the back to school shopping trip is to be savored.

Along these lines, have fun preparing your child's study area. It's important to be sure that you child has a comfortable, quiet place to study (even for kindergarteners, most of whom have homework these days), and preparing that area can be exciting as school approaches. You may also want to get your routines ready; as you get back onto an earlier schedule, have your kids start laying out their clothes the night before, keeping their shoes by the door, and get back into other morning habits that help you get out the door with less hassle. This can help refine your routine, and make the back to school transition easier.



Talk Amongst Yourselves

One of the best ways to relieve back to school anxiety and prepare for the coming year is to simply talk to your child about what he or she may be feeling. When the subject of school comes up, let your child tell you what's exciting about school as well as what may be a little anxiety-provoking. If your child expresses some negativity about school, don't discount immediately his or her concerns; instead focus on validating feelings. Then you can help find solutions or shift the focus to a more positive one like seeing friends, covering exciting new material, and growing up. This can be an excellent time to discuss important topics like how to handle bullies, peer pressure, and other important topics. This can help your child feel more comfortable, and can help you clarify expectations and troubleshoot. Creating open lines of communication is always important, and letting your child know that you'll be available for support and open discussions can be a crucial part of your relationship, as well as your child's success in school.

Bottom Line

The main thing to remember in dealing with back to school jitters is to be prepared (mentally, logistically, and in all other ways as much as possible), and to play up the fun stuff (friends, new supplies, great teachers and growing up). If you show your enthusiasm for what the new school year brings, your kids are sure to pick up on it, and the nervous energy will turn into excitement. Have fun!

Source: http://stress.about.com/od/studentstress/a/back_to_school.htm

